

PROGRAM SOLICITATION
for a Cooperative Agreement to

Assess the Impact of Free Access to Computers and the Internet at Public Libraries in
Cooperation with the **Institute of Museum and Library Services**

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: September 14, 2007

Proposals in response to this solicitation will be submitted through Grants.gov, the federal government's online application system. The Grants.gov system will accept applications submitted on or before **September 14, 2007**.

All applicants must register with Grants.gov before submitting their applications. The multi-step registration process generally cannot be completed in a single day. Applicants who are not already registered should allow at least two weeks to complete the registration process. Step-by-step instructions for registering and submitting applications through Grants.gov are available at www.grants.gov/GetStarted. Note that extra time should be allowed for validation of applications by Grants.gov following submission. Applicants who have problems registering, or submitting their applications, should call the Grants.gov help desk at 1-800-518-4726; e-mail support@grants.gov; or consult the information posted on the Grants.gov Web site at www.grants.gov/CustomerSupport. The Grants.gov customer service hours are 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM eastern time, Monday through Friday.

Applicants will need to locate the IMLS application package at www.grants.gov. **The Funding Opportunity Number is GF-CA-07.**

For information about this solicitation, please contact Mary Downs, Research Officer, Office of Policy, Planning, Research and Communications, Institute of Museum and Library Services, 1800 M Street NW, 9th Floor, Washington, DC 20036-5802, (202) 653-4682 or mdowns@imls.gov.

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The Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. For general information about IMLS and its programs, see www.imls.gov.

SECTION I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

I.A. Overview

Award amount: up to \$1,000,000

Deadline for submission: September 14, 2007

Award announcement: October 2007

Grant period: 18 months beginning October 2007

I.B. Introduction

The Institute of Museum and Library Services, in response to its legislative authority to conduct analyses on the impact and effectiveness of museum and library services (20 USC Chapter 72, 9108), invites proposals for a project to study the impact of free access to, primarily, computers and the Internet, and, secondarily, to related services at public libraries on individuals, families, and communities. Free access, sometimes called “public access computing” is defined here as access to computers and the Internet, and can also include access to other information technologies, digital resources, databases, networked and virtual services through public libraries, and to the training, technical assistance, and staff knowledgeable in technology services that public libraries provide to help patrons use computers and technology and find desired information. The technology provided at public libraries may range from basic services (computers, the Internet, and online catalogues) to sophisticated, interconnected technologies that bring digital resources and virtual services to patrons.

The study will include one or more surveys of users and providers of free access to computers and the Internet at public libraries as well as the beneficiaries of such services at the individual, family, and community level. The purpose of the study is to provide original research to assist the library and information science field, community planners, state and local governments, and policymakers. The project will be carried out in collaboration with IMLS and with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

1.C. Background

In the mid-1990s, as the Internet became an increasingly important channel for information, and as information and services of all kinds were increasingly available on the Internet, libraries began to enhance their electronic information and services. Public libraries, in particular, responded to community need by providing access to electronic information and services within the library from computers at no charge to users. Support came from a variety of sources including government at all levels and private initiatives. Today, public libraries connect people to information and ideas through a multitude of services: libraries provide patrons with access to computers and the Internet, to digital resources, and to print and media collections in the library itself, and they provide virtual access to online catalogues, reference librarians, databases, and networked services.

Decisions about whether or not to provide free access to computers and the Internet and about the extent of services provided in libraries have historically been based on and validated by measures such as number of users or sessions, amount of time computers are in use, or unfulfilled requests for use. Satisfaction surveys and anecdotal information are also used as decision bases.

There is a lack of research about:

- (1) the value of free access to computers, the Internet, and related technologies and supporting services that accrues to individuals, their families, or their communities;
- (2) the negative impact of absent or low-quality free public access to these resources and services; or
- (3) the correlation between specific types or levels of public library service and use of free access to computers and the Internet and specific desirable impacts

As a result, policy and resource decision makers at all levels have inadequate information on the impact of access, or lack of access, to essential electronic and networked information and services on individual, family, and community well-being.

IMLS wishes to fill this gap by examining the relationship of such free access to representative indicators of quality of life across a broad demographic spectrum, and invites research proposals to:

- (1) develop robust and broadly applicable indicators for the impact of free access to computers, the Internet, and related services in public libraries;
- (2) apply those indicators to validate their robustness and document the extent to which positive and/or negative impact results from the presence or absence of key public access computing resources and services in public libraries; and
- (3) to report the findings of the study.

I.D. Scope of Work

The purpose of the study is to undertake original research and analysis to identify measurable indicators of the social, economic, personal, and/or professional value of free access to computers, the Internet, and related services at public libraries, and of negative impact where service is weak or absent, and to provide new, reliable data on the benefits to individuals, families, and communities of these services and resources at public libraries.

IMLS intends this research to identify a small number of key areas of specific and representative impact at the individual, family, and community levels. Examples of the areas of impact on which the research might focus are education, economic development, health literacy, immigrant acculturation, and social connectedness.

The study will be framed by the following questions:

- 1) What are the demographics of people who use computers, the Internet, and related services in public libraries?
- 2) What information and resources provided by free access to computers, the Internet, and related services in public libraries are people using, across the spectrum of on-site and off-site use?
- 3) How do individuals, families, and communities benefit (with a focus on social, economic, personal, and professional well-being) from free access to computers, the Internet, and related services at public libraries?
- 4) What reliable indicators can measure the social, economic, personal, and/or professional well-being of individuals, families, and communities that result from access to computers, the Internet, and related services at public libraries?

While the number of indicators to be developed may be modest, it is expected that they will have broad relevance and value to planners and policymakers at federal, state, and local levels. The study should develop quality-of-life indicators analogous to those published annually by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (www.childstats.gov). Examples of measures of individual benefit that would be valuable include changes in health, academic performance, or economic or employment status correlated with use of public access computing; examples of measures of community impact might include degree of civic engagement, changes in number of voters, or reduction in crime correlated with use of public access computing.

5) What correlations can be made between the benefits obtained through access to computers and the Internet and a range of demographic variables? What correlations can be made to type, level, or volume of related services?

6) What computer and Internet services and resources are lacking at public libraries that, if provided, could bring about greater benefit?

7) What indicators of negative impact can be identified where free access to computers and the Internet is weak or absent?

The proposal narrative should include a detailed methodology and work plan / schedule of completion with the following main activities: development and testing of research instruments; drafting of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance statements; collection and analysis of data; delivery of draft research report and presentation of preliminary findings at a meeting in Washington, DC (or other appropriate meeting place); and submission of final research report and synthesis.

The methodology will have to be well developed and presented in the proposal. It is expected that sampling methods and levels of measurement will be appropriate to the specified time frame. It is assumed that one or more surveys will provide the primary data for the study and that the survey process will conform to standard protocols. The proposer should identify the socio-economic, demographic, and geographic variables that will inform data collection and analysis and should articulate how the data collected would illustrate impact on quality of life; the proposer should also outline methods to achieve a high response rate and the steps to assure that the response rate will provide statistically valid and reliable information. For OMB guidance on statistical programs and standards, see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/infoereg/statpolicy.html>

The study should sample a broad demographic range of individuals and types of communities, and should include respondents from a full spectrum of age, income level, education level, and ethnicity, as well as geographic representation; the sample should include representation of individuals who rely predominantly on the public library for access to computers and the Internet. In order to capture community-wide benefits, community representatives, businesses, and organizations should be included.

Cooperation of library staff, users, and community representatives will be crucial to success. Issues of privacy and anonymity must be anticipated and addressed.

The draft research report shall include executive summary, literature review, statement of methodology, analysis, report on findings, and recommendations. In addition to the final narrative report, the cooperator will provide a complete technical report that includes the survey instruments, all of the data, and a full description of the survey methodologies used. The final report should be delivered in appropriate and previously agreed upon formats. A brief synthesis

should summarize the background and findings, place the findings in a national context, and be accessible to a broad policy and planning audience.

The above is in addition to the narrative and financial reporting requirements outlined in section VI.D (under Award Administration Information).

An advisory committee, made up of 5-6 members of interested stakeholder groups (e.g., library and information science research field, public libraries, and community service organizations) shall be formed by the cooperator, with final approval of IMLS. The committee shall also include one liaison from IMLS and one from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The advisory committee should meet in the beginning of the project to validate research focus and at appropriate times during the course of the study. The advisory committee will read and comment upon the draft report and synthesis.

As a federal agency, IMLS must acquire approval from the Office of Management and Budget for collections of information from the public. In order to begin the OMB clearance process as early in the period of performance as possible, proposals are expected to include a robust and clearly articulated methodology and as comprehensive a research plan as is feasible. The work plan should allow 16 weeks for OMB clearance. Limited testing of the research instruments may take place during the clearance phase.

It is expected that the cooperator will maintain an open communication with other organizations and research groups conducting studies of Internet access at public libraries and that complement this proposed study; the cooperator may also participate in meetings where information sharing would benefit the proposed study.

IMLS will work with the cooperator to develop a dissemination plan after the award.

SECTION II. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

All types of libraries, except federal and for-profit libraries, may apply. Eligible libraries include public, school, academic, special, private (not-for-profit), archives, library agencies, library consortia, and library associations. Research libraries and archives that give the public access to services and materials suitable for scholarly research not otherwise available and that are not part of a university or college also are eligible.

Institutions of higher education, including public and not-for-profit universities and colleges, are eligible. An academic unit, such as a graduate school of library and information science, may apply as part of an institution of higher education. Library applicants may apply individually or as partners.

In addition, professional associations serving the museum or library field are eligible.

A U.S. non-profit organization with tax-exempt status is eligible, including museum and library service organizations and research organizations. In addition, state and local government agencies and tribal governments are eligible to apply. Individuals are not eligible to apply.

IMLS welcomes proposals that represent collaborations or partnerships between eligible organizations.

Ineligible proposals will not be reviewed.

SECTION III. AWARD INFORMATION

III.A. IMLS anticipates awarding only one (1) Cooperative Agreement.

III.B. The award under this program will be for up to \$1,000,000. No cost sharing is required, but cost sharing will be considered as an evaluation factor.

III.C. The award will be for a maximum of eighteen (18) months from date of award.

III.D. The estimated award date is October 2007, with an immediate start date. IMLS will notify all applicants of final decisions. No information about the status of an application will be released until all applications have been reviewed and all negotiations are concluded.

SECTION IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

IV.A. The application package is downloaded from Grants.gov. Electronic application packages are obtained directly from www.grants.gov. Applicants will need to locate the Free Access to Computers and the Internet at Public Libraries RFP package on the site. To locate the package:

1. Go to www.grants.gov to obtain the electronic application package for the Free Access to Computers and the Internet at Public Libraries RFP.
2. In the left column, click on "Apply for Grants," then click on "Download a Grant Application Package." Under "Find," click "Download Grant Application Packages."
3. This will take applicants to the "Download Application Package" screen. On this screen, enter one of the numbers below to locate the Free Access to Computers and the Internet at Public Libraries RFP application package and click on "Download Package." Applicants will need to know the following to locate the package:

CFDA No: 45.312 Funding Opportunity Number: GF-CA-07

4. When an applicant starts to download an application, two items are needed:

Application Instructions: This package contains the grant application guidelines (which include instructions for completing the application) and the IMLS forms for budget, program information, and any others related to this specific program.

Application Package: This package has the face sheet (SF-424s, "Application for Federal Domestic Assistance/Short Organizational Form") and the Attachments form.

Applicants need to download both of these packages to have all of the materials and forms necessary to complete the application.

Information about completing and attaching forms and other documents in the Grants.gov application can be found in the National Leadership Grant guidelines posted on the IMLS Web site: http://www.imls.gov/applicants/grants/pdf/NLG_2007.pdf, pages 19-25.

IV.B. Proposals in response to this solicitation must be submitted on or before September 14, 2007.

For information about this solicitation, please contact:

Mary Downs, Research Officer

Office of Policy, Planning, Research and Communications

Institute of Museum and Library Services

1800 M Street NW, 9th Floor

Washington, DC 20036-5802

Telephone: (202) 653-4682

E-mail: mdowns@imls.gov

IV.C. Any proposal received after the time specified for receipt will not be considered unless (1) it is the only proposal received, or (2) it offers significant cost or technical advantage, and it is received before an award determination has been made.

IV.D. In order to streamline and simplify the management of federal financial assistance, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has directed that all federal agencies require applicants to provide a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number when applying for federal grants or cooperative agreements on or after October 1, 2003. This number is required for registration at Grants.gov.

IV.E. Content

Proposals in response to the solicitation shall include:

-- Face Sheet (also referred to as SF-424S).

-- Program Information Sheet: the three-page form available as a fill-in PDF form or Word document in the Grants.gov Zip file or on the IMLS Web site.

-- Narrative: a project design that addresses the research questions in the Scope of Work. The narrative may be up to 12 pages. Sufficient information should be included in the body of the narrative, and in accompanying documents, for reviewers to evaluate the competitive criteria listed in Section V.B.

Instructions on how to complete the Face Sheet, Program Information Sheet, and Narrative can be found in the National Leadership Grant guidelines posted on the IMLS Web site: http://www.imls.gov/applicants/grants/pdf/NLG_2007.pdf, pages 26-29.

-- Detailed Budget: a three-page form available as a fill-in PDF form or Word document in the Grants.gov Zip file or on the IMLS Web site, replicated for each year of the project, and

-- Summary Budget: a one-page form available as a fill-in PDF form or Word document in the Grants.gov Zip file or on the IMLS Web site.

Instructions on how to complete the budget forms can be found in the National Leadership Grant guidelines posted on the IMLS Web site: http://www.ims.gov/applicants/grants/pdf/NLG_2007.pdf, pages 34-36. Note that the line item for student support on the form will not apply to this solicitation. Applicants may create their own budget forms as long as all items of information included in the forms are included.

-- Partnership statement form, if applicable.

-- Text Responses documents, which will include the following:

- a. Abstract
- b. Schedule of Completion
- c. Budget Justification
- d. Organizational Profile
- e. List of key project staff and consultants
- f. Resumes for key project personnel

-- Other attachments:

- a. Proof of nonprofit status, if applicable
- b. Current, federally negotiated rate for indirect costs, if applicable
- c. Planning documents, such as needs assessments or digitization plans, if applicable

Instructions on how to complete the Text Responses documents and Other Attachments can be found in the National Leadership Grant guidelines posted on the IMLS Web site: http://www.ims.gov/applicants/grants/pdf/NLG_2007.pdf, pages 41-44.

SECTION V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

V.A. IMLS will determine whether applicants are eligible and whether an application is complete.

V.B. All eligible and complete proposals will be competitively reviewed. The evaluation will be based on the following Evaluation Criteria:

V.B.1. Project Design

- Evidence of the quality of the proposed plan to accomplish the work identified above under Scope of Work, including evidence of the applicant's expertise in conducting research and understanding of public library and associated technology use in the United States.
- Evidence that the methodology and design are appropriate to the scope of the project.
- Extent to which the proposal reflects an understanding of and experience in the design, delivery, and management of research projects of similar scope and complexity.

V.B.2. Project Resources: Time, Budget, Personnel, Management Plan

- Evidence of the ability and resources to develop, deliver, and manage the project in an effective and timely manner and adhere to time frames and cost projections

- Extent to which the budget is reasonable and appropriate.
- Evidence that the project personnel are qualified to accomplish project goals and activities, have experience in delivering high-caliber reports of national scope, and have the ability to synthesize research findings and to communicate the findings to a lay audience.
- Extent to which personnel commit adequate time to manage and implement the project activities.
- Evidence of familiarity with libraries' public service role and with the delivery of access to computers, the Internet, and related information technology services in the public library context.

SECTION VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

VI.A. Cooperative Agreement

The instrument that will be awarded as a result of this Program Solicitation is a Cooperative Agreement, as defined by the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Public Law 95-224. A Cooperative Agreement is a cost reimbursement instrument. No fee of profit (or other increment above allowable cost) is allowed.

VI.B. Terms and Conditions

Institute of Museum and Library Services Cooperative Agreements are subject to the General Terms and Conditions for grantees (please see <http://www.ims.gov/recipients/administration.shtml>).

The Cooperator shall also comply with the applicable OMB Circulars and with the Institute of Museum and Library regulations at 45 C.F.R. subparts 1180, 1181, 1182, 1183, 1185, and 1186. Such OMB Circulars and IMLS regulations will be incorporated by reference into the Cooperative Agreement.

VI.C. Assurances and Certifications

Assurance of Compliance with Non Discrimination Requirements

By submission of a proposal, the Cooperator hereby agrees that it will execute projects, productions, workshops, and programs in accordance with the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, where applicable. Copies of the nondiscrimination regulations identified above may be obtained by writing to the Office of Civil Rights, Institute of Museum and Library Services, 1800 M Street NW, 9th Floor, Washington, DC 20036.

Certification Concerning Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibilities

In compliance with 45 CFR Part 1185,

1. The Cooperator, certifies to the best of his or her knowledge and belief that the Cooperator and its principals:

- (a) Are not presently excluded or disqualified;
- (b) Have not been convicted within the preceding three years of any of the offenses listed in 45 C.F.R. 1185.800(a) or had a civil judgment rendered against the applicant or its principals for one of those offenses within that time period;
- (c) Are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State, or local) with commission of any of the offenses listed in 45 C.F.R. 1185.800(a); and
- (d) Have not had one or more public transactions (Federal, State, or local) terminated within the preceding three years for cause or default.

2. The Cooperator further certifies that the Cooperator and its principals will comply with 45 C.F.R. Part 1185 Subpart C (Responsibilities of Participants Regarding Transactions) and will require similar compliance with Subpart C by persons at the next lower tier with whom the primary tier participant enters into covered transactions.

Where the Cooperator or any lower-tier participant is unable to certify to this statement, it shall provide an explanation to the IMLS Grants Office.

Delinquent Debt Certification

The Cooperator certifies that it is not delinquent on any Federal debt or, if it is, will provide explanatory information. Examples of relevant debt include delinquent taxes, audit disallowances, and benefit overpayments.

Drug-Free Workplace Act Certification

The Cooperator certifies, as a condition of the award, that the Cooperator will or will continue to provide a drug-free workplace by complying with the requirements in Subpart B of 45 C.F.R. Part 1186.

This includes: making a good faith effort, on a continuing basis, to maintain a drug-free workplace; publishing a drug-free workplace statement; establishing a drug-free awareness program for the applicant's employees; taking actions concerning employees who are convicted of violating drug statutes in the workplace; and identifying (either with this application, upon award, or in documents kept on file in the applicant's office) all known workplaces under the award.

VI.D. Reporting

It will be the responsibility of the recipient to file required reports. Interim narrative performance reports must be submitted within 30 days after the end of each six-month period for the duration of the award, except for the final six months (when final reports will be submitted within 90 days after the end of the grant period).

An annual financial status report must be submitted within 30 days after the end of the first year of the project, unless the award is for a one-year project. For one-year projects, only a final financial status report is required.

Final performance and final financial status reports must be submitted within 90 days of the close of the project period. Interim and final financial status reports must be submitted on the required forms [either SF 269, Financial Status Report (long form), or SF 269A, Financial Status Report (short form)].

Failure to comply with the reporting requirements may result in the loss of current or future funding from the IMLS.

SECTION VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

For information on this solicitation, write or call:
Mary Downs, Research Officer
Office of Policy, Planning, Research and Communications
Institute of Museum and Library Services
1800 M Street NW, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20036-5802
Telephone: (202) 653-4682
E-mail: mdowns@imls.gov

SECTION VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

Rejection and Award

IMLS reserves the right to reject any or all proposals.